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IT has been imagined, that if an ancient inhabitant of this iſland, ſome old Saxon for example, or even in later times, a ſubject of one of our Harry's or our Edward's, could riſe from his grave and take a ſurvey of the preſent generation, he would never ſuſpect us to be the deſcendants of his cotemporaries, but would ſtare about him with ſurprize, and be apt to fancy himſelf among a nation of foreigners, if not among a race of animals of a different ſpecies. I have ſometimes thought that ſuch a perſon would be no leſs puzzled to know his country again than his countrymen; ſuch a change would he find in the natural face of England, as well as in the manners of

of its inhabitants. The great increaſe of public and private buildings, the difference of architecture, the frequent navigation of rivers, and above all, the introduction and whimſical variations of GARDENING, have contributed ſo effectually to new-dreſs our iſland, which before was covered over with rude foreſts and extended marſhes, that it would require ſome time and pains to diſcover her ancient features under ſo total a diſguiſe. This is more particularly the caſe with the counties adjacent to London, over which the Genius of GARDENING exerciſes his power ſo often and ſo wantonly, that they are uſually new-created once in twenty or thirty years, and no traces left of their former condition. Nor is this to be wondered at; for GARDENING, being the dreſs of nature, is as liable to the caprices of faſhion, as are the dreſſes of the human body; and there is a certain mode of it in every age, which grows antiquated, becomes obſolete and ridiculous in the next. So that were any man of taſte now to lay out his ground in the ſtyle which prevailed leſs than half a century ago, it would occaſion as much aſtoniſhment and laughter, as if a modern beau ſhould appear in the drawing-room in red ſtockings, or introduce himſelf into a polite aſſembly in one of my lord Foppington's perriwigs.

WHAT was the prevailing mode in Milton's days, may be gueſſed from a paſſage in his IL PENSEROSO, where he deſcribes RETIRED LEISURE taking his delight in *trim gardens*. The practice, it ſhould ſeem, was to embroider and flouriſh over the ground with *curious knots of flowers*, as the ſame poet calls them in another part of his works; and in this there was ſomething of chearfulneſs and gaiety at leaſt, though the judicious eye could not help being diſpleaſed with the fantaſtical quaintneſs of the deſign.

JAMES the ſecond was depoſed, and the immortal king William came to the crown of theſe kingdoms; an æra as remarkable in the annals of GARDENING as in thoſe of government; but far leſs auſpicious in the former inſtance. The mournful family of Yews came over with the houſe of Orange; the ſombre taſte of Holland grew into vogue; and ſtrait canals, rectilineal walks, and rows of clipt ever-greens were all the mode. It was the compliment

pliment which England paid her new ſovereign, to wear the dreſs of a Dutch moraſs. The royal gardens of Kenſington, Hampton-court and Richmond ſet the example; and good whigs diſtinguiſhed their loyalty by fetching their plans from the ſame country which had the honour of producing their king; a country never greatly celebrated for taſte in any inſtance, and leaſt of all in the article now under conſideration. But ſuch was the error of the times; our connoiſſeurs in their zeal all became mynheers; and it would probably have been then eſteemed as great a mark of diſaffection to have laid out ground differently from the true Belgic model, as it would be now to wear a white roſe on the tenth of June.

THIS Dutch abſurdity, like all other follies, had its run, and in time expired. The great Kent appeared at length in behalf of nature, declared war againſt the taſte in faſhion, and laid the axe to the root of artificial ever-greens. Gardens were no longer filled with yews in the ſhape of giants, Noah's ark cut in holly, St. George and the dragon in box, cypreſs lovers, lauruſtine bears, and all that race of root-bound monſters, which flouriſhed ſo long and looked ſo tremendous round the edges of every graſs-plat. At the ſame time the dull uniformity of deſigning was baniſhed; high walls excluding the country, were thrown down; and it was no longer thought neceſſary that every grove ſhould nod at a rival, and every walk be paired with a twin-brother. The great maſter abovementioned, truly the diſciple of nature, imitated her in the agreeable wildneſs and beautiful irregularity of her plans, of which there are ſome noble examples ſtill remaining, that abundantly ſhew the power of his creative genius.

BUT it is our misfortune, that we always run beyond the goal, and are never contented to reſt at that point, where perfection ends, and exceſs and abſurdity begin. Thus our preſent artiſts in GARDENING far exceed the wildneſs of nature, and pretending to improve on the plans of Kent, diſtort their ground into irregularities the moſt offenſive that can be imagined. A great comic painter has proved, I am told, in a piece every day expected, that the line of beauty is an S: I take this to be the unanimous opinion of all our profeſſors of horticulture, who

ſeem

ſeem to have the moſt idolatrous veneration for that crooked letter at the tail of the alphabet. Their land, their water muſt be ſerpentine; and becauſe the formality of the laſt age ran too much into right lines and parallels, a ſpirit of oppoſition carries the preſent univerſally into curves and mazes.

It was queſtioned of ſome old mathematician, a great bigot to his favourite ſcience, whether he would conſent to go to heaven in any path that was not triangular? It may, I think, with equal propriety be queſtioned of a modern GARDENER, whether he would conſent to go thither in any path that is not ſerpentine? Nothing on earth, at leaſt, can pleaſe out of that model; and there is reaſon to believe that paradiſe itſelf would have no charms for one of theſe gentlemen, unleſs its walks be diſpoſed into labyrinth and mæander. In ſerious truth, the vaſt multitude of groteſque little villa's, which grow up every ſummer within a certain diſtance of London, and ſwarm more eſpecially on the banks of the Thames, are fatal proofs of the degeneracy of our national taſte. With a deſcription of one of theſe whimſical nothings, and with a few previous remarks upon the owner of it, I ſhall conclude this paper.

'SQUIRE Muſhroom, the preſent worthy poſſeſſor of Block-hill, was born at a little dirty village in Hertfordſhire, and received the rudiments of his education behind a writing-deſk, under the eye of his father, who was an attorney at law. It is not material to relate, by what means he broke looſe from the bondage of parchment, or by what ſteps he roſe from primæval meanneſs and obſcurity to his preſent ſtation in life. Let it be ſufficient to ſay, that at the age of forty he found himſelf in poſſeſſion of a conſiderable fortune. Being thus enriched, he grew ambitious of introducing himſelf to the world as a man of taſte and pleaſure; for which purpoſe he put an edging of ſilver lace on his ſervants waiſtcoats, took into keeping a brace of whores, and reſolved to have a VILLA. Full of this pleaſing idea, he purchaſed an old farm-houſe, not far diſtant from the place of his nativity, and fell to building and planting with all the rage of taſte.

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The old manſion immediatly ſhot up into Gothic ſpires, and was plaiſtered over with ſtucco; the walls were notched into battlements; uncouth animals were ſet grinning at one another over the gate-poſts, and the hall was fortified with three ruſty ſwords, five brace of piſtols, and a *Meduſa*'s head ſtaring tremendous over the chimney. When he had proceeded thus far, he diſcovered in good time that his houſe was not habitable; which obliged him to add two rooms entirely new, and entirely incoherent with the reſt of the building. Thus while one half is deſigned to give you the idea of an old Gothic edifice, the other half preſents to your view Venetian windows, ſlices of pilaſter, baluſtrades, and other parts of Italian architecture.

A library of books, as it is eſteemed an eſſential ornament in a modiſh VILLA, was the next object of the 'ſquire's ambition. I was conducted into this apartment, ſoon after its completion, and could not help obſerving with ſome ſurprize that all the volumes on the ſhelves were in duodecimo; at which expreſſing a curioſity, I received the following anſwer, verbatim: "Why, ſir, I'll "inform you how that matter came to paſs; I ordered "my carpenter to *tickle me up* a neat faſhionable ſet of "caſes for the reception of books, and the d——d "blundering booby made all the ſhelves, as you ſee, of "a ſize only to hold your duodecimo's, as they call 'em; "ſo I was obliged, you know, to purchaſe books of "*a proper dimenſion*, and ſuch as would fit the places "they were to ſtand in."

BUT the triumph of his genius was ſeen in the diſpoſition of his gardens, which contain every thing in leſs than two acres of ground. At your firſt entrance, the eye is ſaluted with a yellow ſerpentine river, ſtagnating through a beautiful valley, which extends near twenty yards in length. Over the river is thrown a bridge, *partly in the chineſe manner*, and a little ſhip with ſails ſpread and ſtreamers flying, floats in the midſt of it. When you have paſſed this bridge, you enter into a grove perplexed with errors and crooked walks; where